

**F**ormer Portland Police Chief Tom Potter was inaugurated as mayor Jan. 3, and he seems poised to continue the legacy of Vera Katz in making the Rose City one of the country's most queer-friendly places.

The outspoken liberal—who has served as a board member for the American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon and as director of the New Avenues for Youth homeless youth agency—is the father of Portland's first openly queer cop, Katie, who is suing the state for the right to marry.

According to his staff, Potter was too harried to handle all the media requests lobbed his way in the past several weeks, but he found time for a brief e-mail interview.

He prefaced his responses by saying, "As mayor, I look forward to serving our wonderful gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered and questioning Portlanders."

**Meg Daly:** Last year you spoke at Equity Foundation's Safe Schools Summit about bullying and harassment of queer kids and children of gay, lesbian, bi and trans parents. As Equity's study has found, an estimated 20,000 high school students in Oregon reported that

# THE BUCK STOPS HERE

**Incoming Mayor Tom Potter takes on school funding, meth abuse and homelessness**

by Meg Daly



Tom Potter and wife Karin Hansen at the mayor's inauguration ceremony

they had been targeted with anti-gay harassment at school or traveling to and from school. How will you address these issues? What kind of funding needs to be made available?

**Tom Potter:** I would discuss this with the school administration to see what programs they do have in place to support these groups in our schools. If there are no support programs in place...then I would ask the administration to provide them.

**MD:** How do you plan to partner with local agencies and nonprofits that serve gay and bisexual men, a population that has been hit hard by meth use, leading to increase rates of STDs like syphilis, HIV and AIDS?

**TP:** This problem is enormous and well beyond the capacity of government to single-handedly eliminate meth. It requires a sea change in the culture and thinking of America that accepts drugs, in all their forms, as an acceptable part of community life. Much like the cultural shift in behaviors of gay men when HIV/AIDS hit in the '80s, we need a change in behaviors on a similar scale with all people.

As we challenge the community to change its behaviors, I will convene police, neighborhoods, businesses and nonprofits to begin the systematic reduction of meth use in Portland. Specific to nonprofits that work with gay and bisexual meth users, I will stress the need, and funding, for more education, prevention, intervention and treatment. Since this epidemic faces many neighborhoods, and the effects of meth are felt in every area of society, we need a broad-based strategy to eliminate meth labs through enforcement; stricter control of the substances used in the manufacture of meth; providing more treatment alternatives to jail for

users, while locking up the dealers; and insisting on school programs designed to help children and young people with meth-addicted parents.

**MD:** How will the new strategy to deal with chronic homelessness help street youth, 30 percent of whom are queer?

**TP:** As mayor, I support our community's efforts to eliminate homelessness in 10 years. The city of Portland is spending an additional \$11 million to provide housing for homeless individuals and families. Currently, street youth are served by New Avenues for Youth, Outside In and Janus Youth Programs. All three programs have counseling and other programs targeting gay and lesbian youth. Homeless youth programs have seen public funding reduced over the last several years, and these agencies are increasingly relying on fund raising and grants to pay for services.

As with so many issues in our society, we seem to have more problems than people and resources to solve them. Homeless youth need you to volunteer to work with them. Eighty percent of homeless youth come from abusive families, and many have dropped out of the foster care system. Homeless youth need more individuals and families who will provide nurturing environments and homes. I am asking the Portland GLBTQ community to become a Big Brother, Big Sister, foster parent or mentor to our homeless youth and youth who need foster care. All of us share in the responsibility to provide safe environments for our GLBTQ children and youth. The buck stops with us. **J**

Staff Writer MEG DALY can be reached at [megdaly@justout.com](mailto:megdaly@justout.com).

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